

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 2272

TOKYO FOR AMBASSADOR SAXBE

E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: INDIAN PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESIDENT AHMED'S REFERENCES TO
PINDI AND WASHINGTON

BEGIN SUMMARY: INDIAN PRESS FEB 18 PROMINENTLY FRONT-PAGED
PRESIDENT AHMED'S WARNING TO PAKISTAN OF REARMING ITSELF AND HIS
HOPE THAT THE US WOULD SUPPORT THE TREND TOWARD NORMALIZATION IN
THE SUB-CONTINENT. THERE WAS EXTENSIVE RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS
COVERAGE. THE MEDIA ALSO NOTED CONCERN OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
OVER THE REPORTED US DECISION TO RESUME ARMS SUPPLY TO PINDI.
A MAJOR NEWSPAPER OBSERVED INDIA HAS BEEN "EXCEPTIONALLY LUCKY"
IN THE SUCCESSION OF AMERICAN AMBASSADORS TO INDIA. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT AHMED'S ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT DOMINATED THE NEWS-
PAPERS ON TUESDAY MORNING. MOST PAPERS STRESSED THAT THE PRESIDENT
HAS WARNED PAKISTAN "OF THE FUTILITY OF REARMING ITSELF BY PROCURING
ARMS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES" AS THIS WILL "HINDER RECONCILIATION AND
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DURABLE PEACE ON THE SUB-CONTINENT." THE
COUNTRY'S LEADING PAPER, TIMES OF INDIA, ACCORDED IT THE LEAD NEWS
SPOT WITH FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE: "PRESIDENT ASKS PINDI TO REALIZE
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FUTILITY OF REARMING ITSELF"

2. NEWS ACCOUNTS CITED PRESIDENT AHMED'S HOPE THAT "THE US WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE TREND TOWARD NORMALIZATION ON THE SUB-CONTINENT AND WILL NOT TAKE ANY STEPS WHICH MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT IT."

3. NEWS COMMENTS SAID THAT LOBBY CIRCLES NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE TO THE US WAS "IN A LOW KEY," ADDING THESE CIRCLES HAD EXPECTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD "UTILIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DENOUNCE STRONGLY THE US MOVE."

4. MOST PAPERS PROMINENTLY RAN RAJYA SABHA DEBATE ON THE US ARMS ISSUE NOTING MEMBERS' EXPRESSION OF "CONCERN AND RESENTMENT" ON THE OPENING DAY OF PARLIAMENT. THEY ALSO MENTIONED CHAIRMAN B D JATTI'S STATEMENT THAT THE SUBJECT WOULD COME UP FEB 18 THROUGH A CALL-ATTENTION MOTION. THE QUESTION OF A "FULLER DISCUSSIONS" COULD BE CONSIDERED LATER, THE CHAIRMAN IS REPORTED TO HAVE ADDED.

5. EDITORIAL COMMENTS WERE LARGELY CONFINED TO THE DOMESTIC SITUATION, WITH PASSING MENTION TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. THE INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC TIMES TERMED THE PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE TO THE US A "FRESH DEVELOPMENT." ANOTHER INDEPENDENT DAILY, HINDUSTAN TIMES, OBSERVED THAT THE ADDRESS EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT INDO-PAKISTANI RELATIONS "WILL NOT BE UPSET BY THE THOUGHTLESS INJECTION" OF FRESH US ARMS SUPPLIES TO PINDI. THE CONGRESS PARTY-ORIENTED NATIONAL HERALD WARNED THAT INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS COULD BE "FURTHER HIT IF THE US, WITH WHICH TOO INDIA'S TIES HAVE IMPROVED, DID NOT REFRAIN FROM ARMING THAT COUNTRY." THE MOSCOW-LINING PATRIOT CONCLUDED: "THE HOPE" EXPRESSED THAT NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR ISLAMABAD WILL START AN ARMS RACE AGAINST INDIA SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THESE CAPITALS AS A WARNING."

6. AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "A WELCOME AMERICAN," IN THE INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL EXPRESS, OF DELHI AND BOMBAY, MAINTAINED FEB 17 THAT AMBASSADOR SAXBE "TAKES UP HIS POST UNDER MUCH BETTER AUSPICES, THOUGH NOT ALL THE AUGURIES ARE IN HIS FAVOR." IT TERMED THE "IMPENDING" REMOVAL OF THE AMERICAN EMBARGO ON ARMS SUPPLIES TO PAKISTAN AND INDIA'S CONCERN OVER DIEGO GARCIA "MINOR IRRITANTS" WHICH "SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND UNCLASSIFIED

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WIDE-RANGING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES."

7. IN FURTHER COMMENT, THE NEWSPAPER DECLARED: "MR. SAXBE'S MAJOR TASK WILL BE TO EXPAND THE PROGRAMS FOR JOINT CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION ENVISAGED IN THE OCTOBER AGREEMENTS AND TO PROMOTE THE CONDITIONS FOR WHAT DR. KISSINGER CALLED 'DURABLE AND MATURE RELATIONS' BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE BRINGS TO HIS ASSIGNMENT A GENUINE AND PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA'S PROBLEMS

AND A DEEP SYMPATHY FOR ITS IMMEMORIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE."

8. IN CONCLUSION, THE EDITORIAL SUGGESTED THAT "IN THE NEW
CHAPTER OF INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS," DELHI AND WASHINGTON SHOULD
RECOGNIZE THAT "THOUGH BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION BOTH
CAN CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE BUILDING UP OF A SANER AND SAFER
INTERNATIONAL ORDER."SCHNEIDER

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